LANDMARK DESIGNATION REPORT

ELIZABETH PEABODY PUBLIC SCHOOL

1444 W. AUGUSTA BLVD.

Final Landmark Recommendation adopted by the Commission on Chicago Landmarks, September 1, 2016

CITY OF CHICAGO
Rahm Emanuel, Mayor

Department of Planning and Development
David Reifman, Commissioner

The Commission on Chicago Landmarks, whose nine members are appointed by the Mayor and City Council, was established in 1968 by city ordinance. The Commission is responsible for recommending to the City Council which individual buildings, sites, objects, or districts should be designated as Chicago Landmarks, which protects them by law.

The landmark designation process begins with a staff study and a preliminary summary of information related to the potential designation criteria. The next step is a preliminary vote by the landmarks commission as to whether the proposed landmark is worthy of consideration. This vote not only initiates the formal designation process, but it places the review of city permits for the property under the jurisdiction of the Commission until a final landmark recommendation is acted on by the City Council.

This Landmark Designation Report is subject to possible revision and amendment during the designation process. Only language contained within a designation ordinance adopted by the City Council should be regarded as final.

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ELIZABETH PEABODY PUBLIC SCHOOL BUILDING

1444 W. AUGUSTA BLVD.

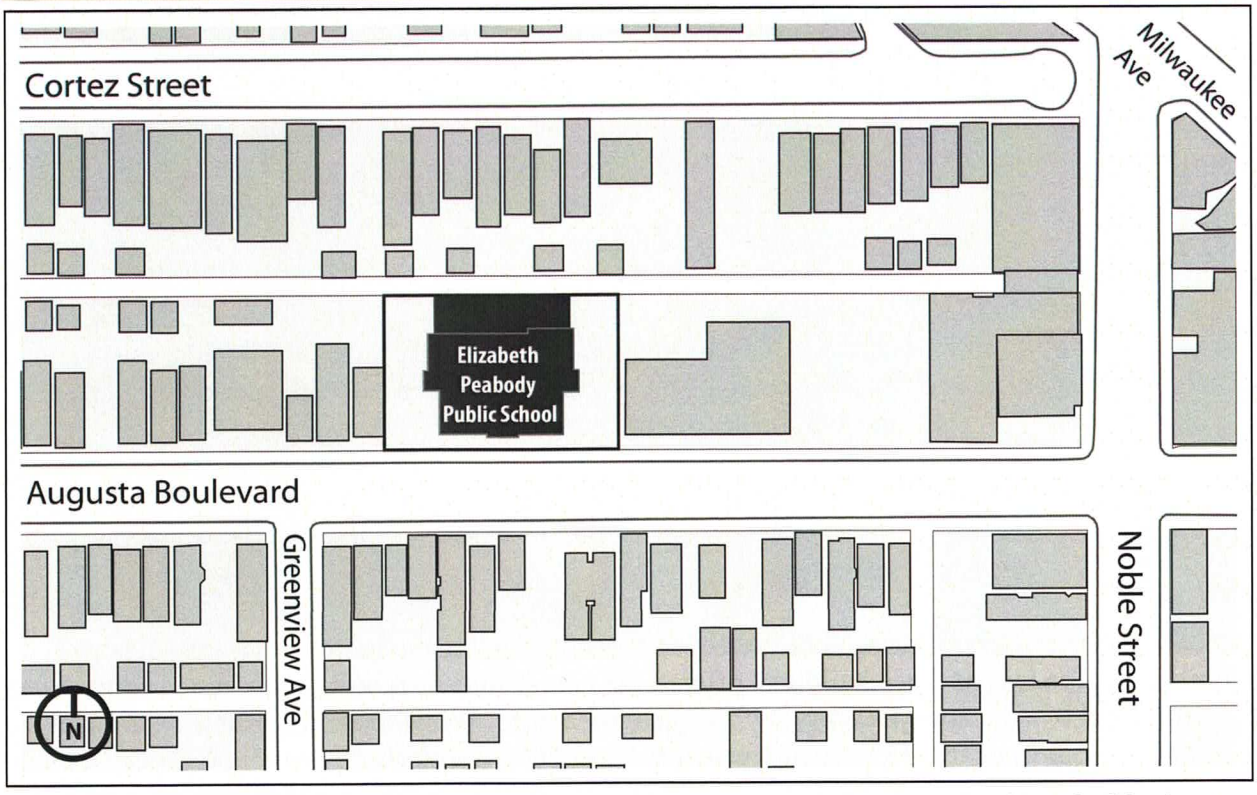
BUILT: 1894

ARCHITECT: W. AUGUST FIEDLER (BOARD OF EDUCATION ARCHITECT)

The Elizabeth Peabody Public School Building is a handsomely-designed and detailed public school building, a significant building type in the context of Chicago history. With its crisp geometric forms, paired with boldly-contrasting red pressed brick and stone walls, it exemplifies Chicago architecture of the 1890s, embracing both tradition and innovation in design. The building has finely-detailed and crafted ornament in stone, molded brick, terra cotta and decorative metal, reflecting the late Victorian love of detail in architecture.

The building was an early design by W. August Fiedler as newly-appointed Architect to the Chicago Board of Education. During Fiedler's tenure, the Board Architect position became an integral part of the Board of Education staff with greater professional support on design matters made readily available to the Board through Fiedler and his fellow architects.

The Peabody Public School Building occupies several lots on the north side of west Augusta Boulevard in Chicago's West Town community area on the Near Northwest Side of Chicago. The school was built in response to the growth of the area's primarily Polish and German immigrant population. Thousands of immigrant families arrived in the area during the turn of the nineteenth century, and West Town became home to the largest Polish population outside of Warsaw. Peabody relieved older, over-crowded schools and gave the neighborhood a new educational "landmark" which would serve Chicago school children for roughly 120 years.



The Elizabeth Peabody School (or simply the Peabody School) occupies a portion of a block on the north side of Augusta Boulevard east of Noble Street.

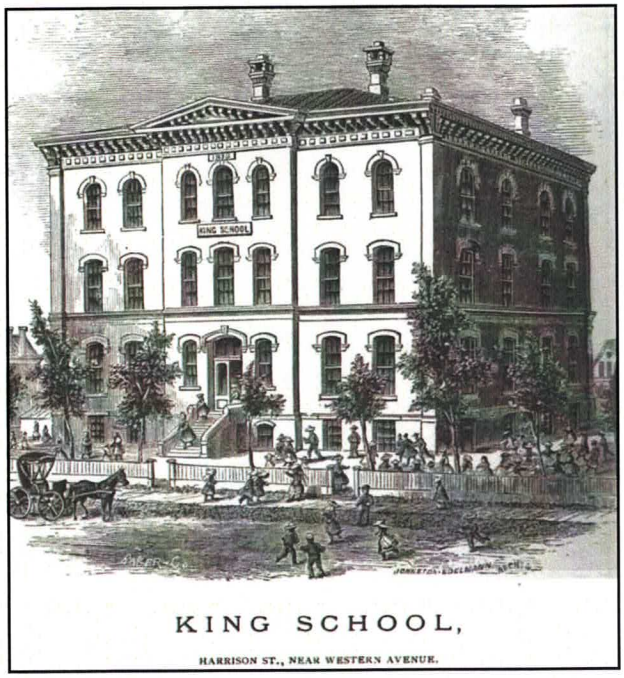
THE HISTORY OF PUBLIC SCHOOL ARCHITECTURE IN CHICAGO UP TO 1894

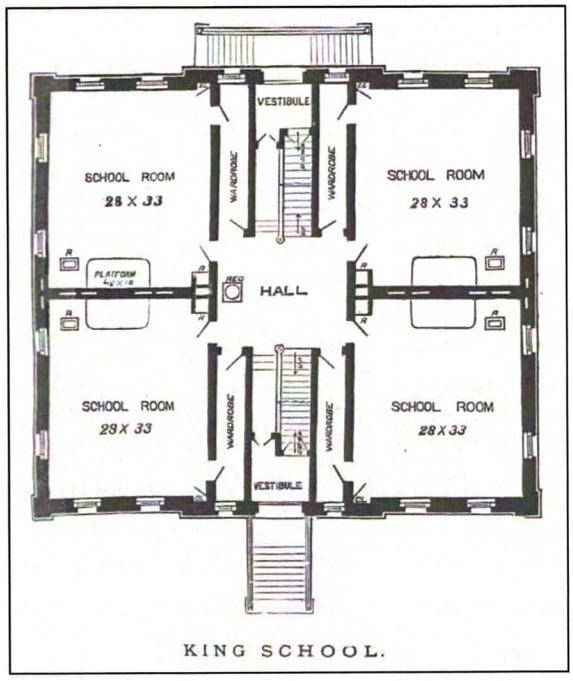
Chicago's first public schools were created following Chicago's incorporation in 1837 with the founding of a managing board appointed by the City Council. Several rudimentary frame schoolhouses were constructed in the 1840s, during which time the Illinois state legislature granted additional power to Chicago to purchase and manage school land, and to fund the construction of new schools though taxation. Tax funds allowed for the construction of Chicago's first brick school, later known as the Dearborn School, which was completed in 1845 in the Greek Revival style (and demolished in 1871). Dozens of new school buildings were completed through the 1860s as Chicago's student population rose from fewer than 2,000 in 1849 to nearly 41,000 in the 1860s. School buildings, such as the Chicago High School, built in 1856 in the Gothic Revival Style (and demolished in 1950), and the Haven School completed in the Italianate style in 1862 (and demolished after it closed in 1974), followed conventional rectilinear floor plans with classrooms arranged around central hallways.

Across the United States in the mid-nineteenth century, the design of school houses followed a few standard formulas for size and layout. The intended purpose of the school building was primarily to contain classrooms where long-established methods of recitation and memorization could be performed. School buildings of this period were simple, either single room structures in rural area and small towns, or larger multiple room buildings in cities. All schoolhouse designs featured a standard square or rectangular footprint. A few schoolhouses offered more than just classrooms, with some allowing for office space for teachers and principals.

While most school houses shared similar basic design principals, concerns about the healthfulness of enclosed indoor air and the benefits of improving the illumination of classrooms led to the publication of guides for the design of school buildings, including one published in 1848 by Henry Barnard, the commissioner of the public schools of Providence, Rhode Island. In his book *School Architecture; or Contributions to the Improvement of School-houses in the United States*, Barnard proposed a series of standards for the location of schools, the size and layout of classrooms, the size and position of windows for light, and most importantly the ventilation of buildings. Having toured schools of every type across country during his career, he asserted that existing buildings were largely unhealthful and uninspiring. School children, he felt, "should spend a large part of the most impressible period of their lives," in school, in buildings that could positively shape their lives. Overall, "the style of the exterior should exhibit good, architectural proportion, and be calculated to inspire children and the community generally with respect for the object for which it is devoted." Barnard's moral-driven enthusiasm for the purpose and design of public school buildings helped slowly propel changes in American school design.

In Chicago, the Great Fire of 1871 destroyed much of the city, including ten public school buildings. The loss of these buildings offered the opportunity to rebuild following new methods popularized by education thinkers such as Henry Barnard. While student enrolment dropped initially, by 1874 nearly 48,000 students were enrolled in the city's 39 school buildings. One of the new post-fire buildings was the King School, completed in 1874 by architects Johnston & Edelmann in the Italianate style (Harrison Street and Western Avenue, demolished). Its form





The King School, designed by Johnston & Edelmann in 1874, was designed in the Italianate style, which was popular in the 1870s. This school building was favored by the school board, and it influenced the design of Chicago school buildings through the early 1880s.

The Ruben Salazar Elementary School (originally the North Division High School) at 160 W. Wendell St. was one of the last Chicago school buildings completed following the form and style of the King School model. Designed by school board architect Julius S. Ender and completed in 1883, it was designated as a Chicago landmark in 1978.

followed the standard template with a symmetrical square footprint with rooms set around a central hallway. While similar to previous schools in form, the King School featured many of the improvements to design, layout, ventilation, and lighting which had been advocated by educators for over a half century. The three-story, twelve-room King School featured tall windows and special ducted ventilation systems and other new features. In addition, as a precaution against fire, brick interior partitions were used instead of the previous standard of frame. The King School's modern design and low construction budget made it the school board's favored design. Nearly all public school houses built in Chicago through the 1890s followed this basic form.

It was also during the 1880s that the job of designing Chicago public school buildings became more defined. The role of school board architect had developed unofficially in the late 1870s with early Chicago architect Augustus Bauer, who designed over twenty new school buildings following the standard form established by Johnston & Edelmann. The Chicago Board of Education then officially created the position of architect to the Board in 1882 and appointed Bauer to the position. Bauer held the official position for less than a year before contract controversy ended his term. The Board elected three architects in succession, each serving brief terms of fewer than six months, before appointing architect John J. Flanders as architect.

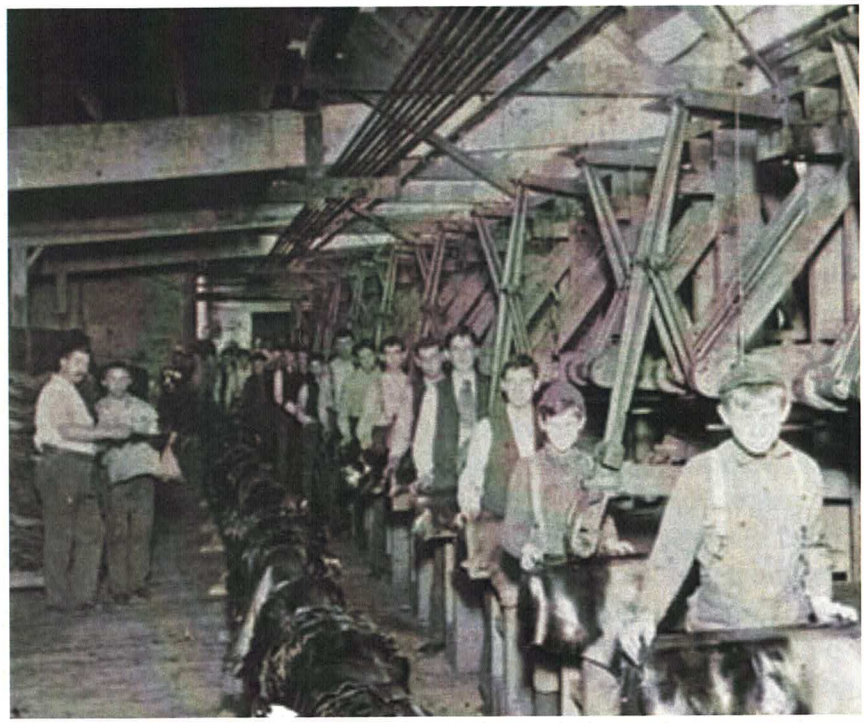
Flanders altered the standard school building design by introducing asymmetrical footprints and elaborate architectural design elements. An early example of his work near the Peabody School is the 1884 John Lothrop Motley School Building at 739 North Ada Street. (given a preliminary Chicago Landmark recommendation by the Commission on Chicago Landmarks in May 2016). In between Flanders' two terms as school architect was Charles Rudolph, the architect of the James Mulligan Public School Building at 1855 to1863 North Sheffield Avenue (1889-1890; a designated Chicago Landmark).

Architect William August Fiedler, commonly known as August Fiedler, was elected Architect of the Chicago Board of Education in 1893, and like his predecessors, he was confronted with the issue of overcrowding and the ever-growing demand for more schools. During the 1880s and 1890s, Chicago's population more than doubled as a steady stream of immigrants settled in the city. Large-scale annexations of land in 1889 also brought additional populations into the city, including over 35,000 students. All wanted city services, including public schools.

The student population also increased after the state's 1883 Compulsory Education Law was both strengthened with the appointment of truant officers and a Superintendent of Compulsory Education, and expanded to require that all children ages 7 to 14 attend school for 16 weeks per year. Despite criticism of the law as unenforceable and despite the School Board freely granting "good cause" exemptions to keep children at home or at work, the new law increased demand for seats in Chicago's public schools, particularly in the city's growing immigrant communities like West Town.

During 1894, the School Board approved and built nineteen new schools designed by board architect William Fiedler, including the Peabody School. This was the greatest period of school building construction since the Board's concentrated efforts to address overcrowding began a decade earlier.

John J. Flanders developed a new design for Chicago's public school buildings following his appointment as Architect to the Board of Education in early 1884. His prototype design was applied to schools erected between 1884 and 1885, including the John Lothrop Motley Public School Building (right), located at 739 N. Ada St. and built in 1884. A preliminary landmark recommendation was approved by the Commission on Chicago Landmarks for the building in May 2016.



Child labor became a significant issue by the late nineteenth century. The children in this photo are preparing hides in a Chicago leather factory. In 1884, the State of Illinois passed its first law requiring that children ages 8 to 14, and later 7 to 14 attend school. This law, in addition to Chicago's growing immigrant population, and the annexation of several surrounding townships in 1889, placed thousands of new students in Chicago's school system.

BUILDING CONSTRUCTION AND DESCRIPTION

In early 1893, the Chicago Board of Education approved the purchase of land for a new school site on the north side of west Augusta Boulevard, between north Noble Street and north Greenview Avenue. The site, which would be the location of the new Peabody Public School, was one of ten across the city where new schools were authorized to be built by the Board that year.

Peabody was built to relieve overcrowding at two older West Town schools: the William H. Wells School (936 North Ashland Avenue, built in 1868 and later rebuilt), and the Kosciusko School (formerly the Division and Cleaver Street School, built in 1876 and later replaced by Holy Trinity High School). A September 1895 *Chicago Tribune* article commented that "the increase in population in Chicago is of such a character that the School Board will not see its work of erecting new buildings completed for many years." Peabody's foundation was laid early in 1894, and by August, the roof was complete and finish plasterwork had begun. The school with its fifteen classrooms opened on January 7, 1895.

Description of the Peabody Public School Building

The Elizabeth Peabody Public School Building was one of Fiedler's first school designs. His composition for the school is compellingly bold yet utilitarian; it follows a rigid geometric design which is emphasized by ornament. Its design is based on historic architectural styles popular during the period, including the Romanesque Revival and Queen Anne architectural styles, while also being evocative of buildings designed by progressive Chicago architect Louis Sullivan and others that were involved in defining new American architectural styles through the embrace of Arts-and-Crafts theories. Trained in Germany, Fiedler may also have incorporated aspects of contemporary German architecture, including crisp geometry and contrasting brick and stone walls.

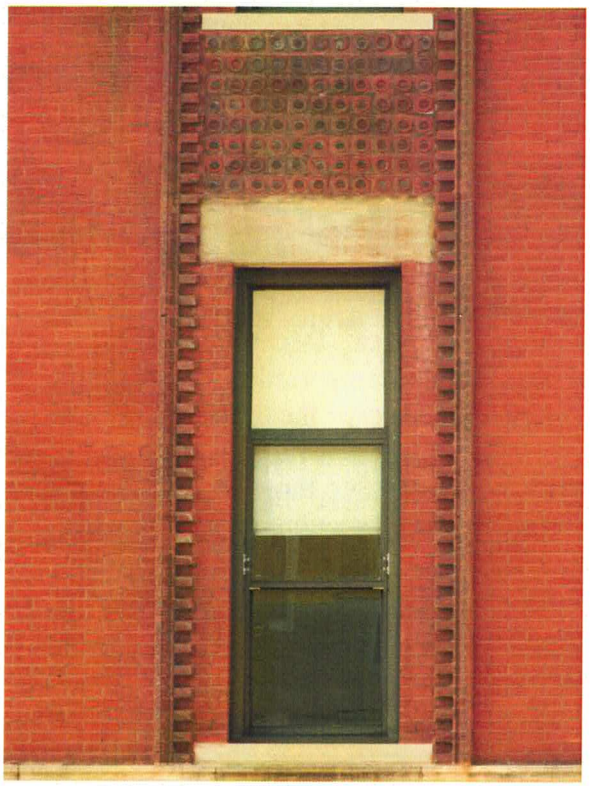
Fiedler's design for the Peabody School represents an embrace of both tradition and innovation that was characteristic of much Chicago architecture of the 1890s. It was unusual among Fiedler's other school designs of the period in that he used the standard school footprint and overall building form established by the King School in 1874. Other schools completed by Fiedler in 1894 and 1895 frequently featured long building footprints, centrally-located stairwells, entrances set back or made prominent with projecting vestibules, and irregular roof lines. Fiedler's other school designs primarily exemplified the Renaissance Revival style, with no two alike.

In contrast, the general form of the Peabody School was rather like earlier school buildings. Its symmetrical footprint, with projecting side wings on the east and west sides accommodating stairwells and classrooms, resembles the King School and subsequent schools designed by Augustus Bauer. The main entrance is neither recessed nor set in a vestibule as in Fiedler's other designs; instead it is centered on the Augusta Boulevard façade following long-established architectural standards for school design. Similarly, the school's exterior configuration and materials, including a stone base and brick-clad upper floors, trimmed with a pressed metal cornice, give Peabody some of the visual character of earlier Chicago schoolhouses.

W. August Fiedler's 1894 Peabody school was one of his first designs. While maintaining the traditional tripartite design of base, middle, and crown, it blends older school building forms and styles with hints of modern new American Architectural styles.

Despite these similarities with earlier school buildings, the clean-lined Peabody School embraces some of the prevalent modern design edicts of the 1890s without letting go of precedent. The school's elevations have a tripartite design from bottom to top. Above a base of rusticated Joliet limestone, the first floor is faced in smooth-faced limestone. (This limestone replaced deteriorated original smooth sandstone in 1998. A sandstone keystone and voussoirs remain as part of the main entrance arch. Upper-floor sandstone lintels and sills remain as well.) Above the first floor, three floors are clad in red pressed brick. Decorative brick provides borders framing windows within structural bays, emphasizing verticality. A simple metal cornice and a brick parapet with a decorative square pattern caps the building.

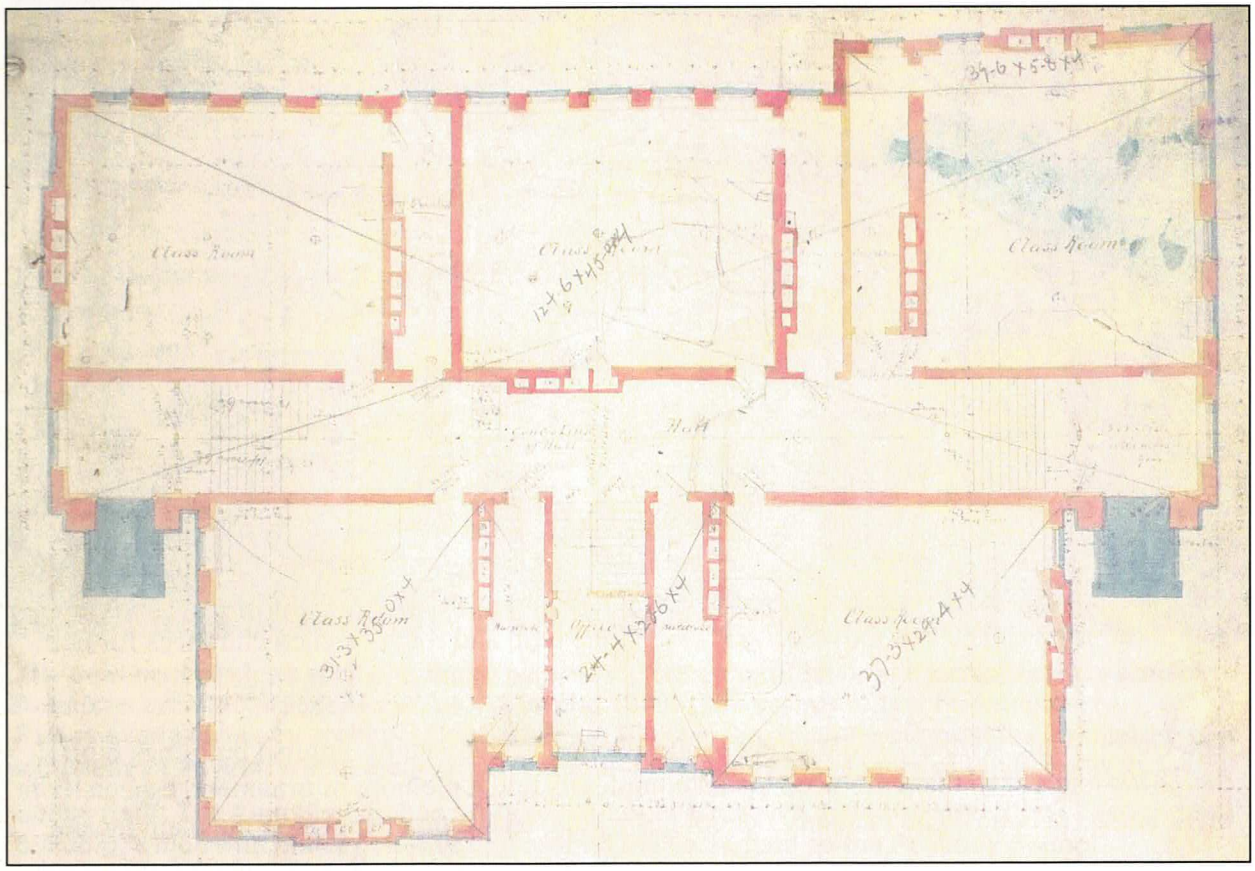
In addition, the main (Augusta) elevation is symmetrically divided into three sections from side to side, with a central section projecting towards the street and side sections more recessed. The central bay features the main entrance, which is framed by a triumphal arch set into the limestone base with plain spandrels and a simple, fluted keystone. The coursed limestone cladding of the base extends above the entrance to the first floor and frames a set of three windows. Sets of three windows on the second and third floors are bordered on either side by a brick dentil, or saw tooth, pattern that extends from the second-floor limestone sill through to the metal cornice above the third floor. Between the second and third floors there is an oversize



Above: The Peabody School features several decorative elements. A terra cotta panel with the school's name in raised letters entwined with foliate leaves can be seen above the main Augusta Boulevard entrance. A shallow metal cornice with a slim profile wraps around the school just below the parapet. The parapet over the main entrance has decorative blind arches set in brick and terra cotta.

Left: The verticality of the school's design is emphasized by a decorative molded brick border combined with bricks set in a dentil pattern. Spandrels between windows have fields of pattern brick, which also highlight the building's vertical proportions.

W. August Fiedler's design for the Peabody School incorporates forms from John J. Flanders 1884 school building prototype. Above left, the Von Humboldt School designed by Flanders in 1884 follows the prototype plan below. Four corner classrooms each follow the same layout with a wall of four windows to the right and a wall with two windows to the left. The classroom is copied and rotated 90 degrees for each corner. This floor plan and method of creating similar classroom spaces can be seen in Fiedler's design for the Peabody School, above right. Banks of four windows can be seen on the right side of each elevation, similar to the Von Humboldt School. On the left side of each elevation, Fiedler added an additional window in place of Flanders's chimney stacks.



panel of terra cotta with the name "ELIZABETH PEABODY" set among molded foliate motifs. The central bay is topped by a parapet with a "blind" arcade pattern of brick with terra cotta spandrels and keystones.

The east section features a set of four windows per floor that are separated by brick mullions. Pressed brick with raised circles creates a uniform spandrel field between floors from the top of limestone lintels to the bottom of limestone sills. A brick dentil pattern borders either side of these sets of windows, running continuously from the top of the limestone base through to the metal cornice. The west section is similar to the east section, except that there are three individual bays of evenly spaced windows. Each narrow bay features similar fields of circle-decorated pressed brick between floors, and each bay is bordered on each side by a brick dentil pattern.

The Peabody School's interior layout features five classrooms per floor with mechanical and play and washrooms in the basement. Each floor features four corner classrooms, where each classroom has a wall of four tall windows and a second wall of two or three single windows. These identical rectangular classrooms are oriented in a pin-wheel pattern so that the right side of each exterior wall of the school features a bay with sets of four windows.

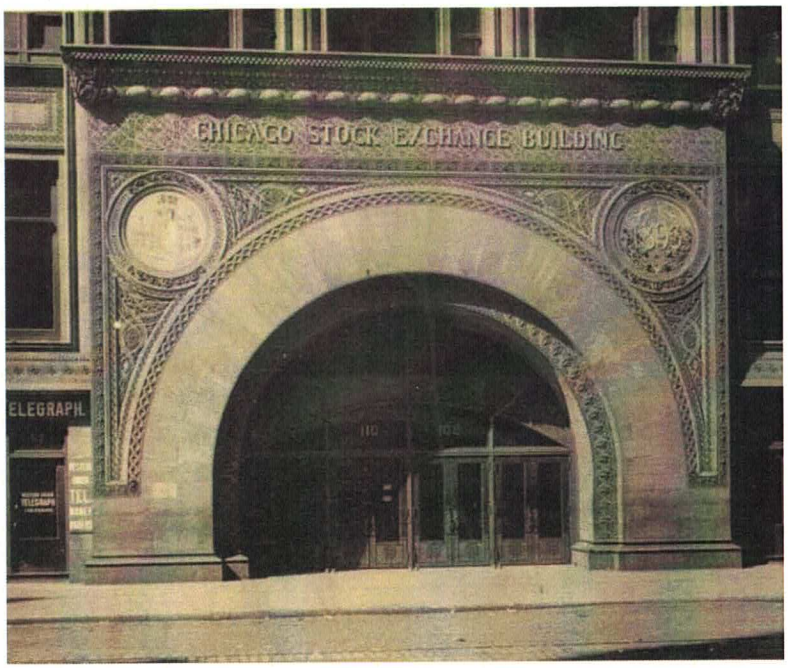
This floor design was adapted from a standardized school plan developed by Board of Education Architect John J. Flanders in 1884 (The 1884 John Lathrop Motley school shares this same general layout.) School design advocates prescribed many features to make schools more effective and efficient. One important component was the allocation of natural light to classrooms, especially at a time when artificial lighting was insufficient and seen as contributing to poor health. Flanders's floor plan allowed for a school to be built regardless of its north–south orientation, thereby ensuring that most classrooms would benefit from optimal sun light during the day. Fiedler copied Flanders's standardized floor plan and cloaked them within the walls of a school house of his own design.

Design influences in the Peabody Public School Building

Taken as a whole, the Elizabeth Peabody Public School Building synthesizes a number of historically-significant architectural trends found in Chicago architecture of the late nineteenth century. It utilizes historic styles such as the Romanesque Revival and Queen Anne. It incorporates Arts-and-Crafts theories about the primacy of building materials in the creation of a visual style. It references the innovative architecture of Chicagoan Louis Sullivan, a contemporary of Fiedler.

Based on the designs of noteworthy Massachusetts architect Henry Hobson Richardson, the Richardsonian Romanesque architectural style was influenced by the medieval architecture of 11th and 12th century European churches, but simplified visually to emphasize underlying geometric forms. The Peabody School's bold stone base and round-arched entrances for both front and side entrances show the influence of the Richardsonian Romanesque.

The Queen Anne style as used by the Peabody School was based on English buildings built in the 1870s and 1880s that embraced visual complexity and a plethora of ornament, especially in brick and terra cotta. The Peabody School has a large terra-cotta panel atop the main façade



The bold central stone arch entrance and side arches of the Peabody School reference modern American architectural styles of the 1880s and 1890s. The arches reflect the weight of Romanesque forms by architect Henry Hobson Richardson, but also suggest the geometric simplicity of an arch within a square that is found frequently in the work of Louis Sullivan.

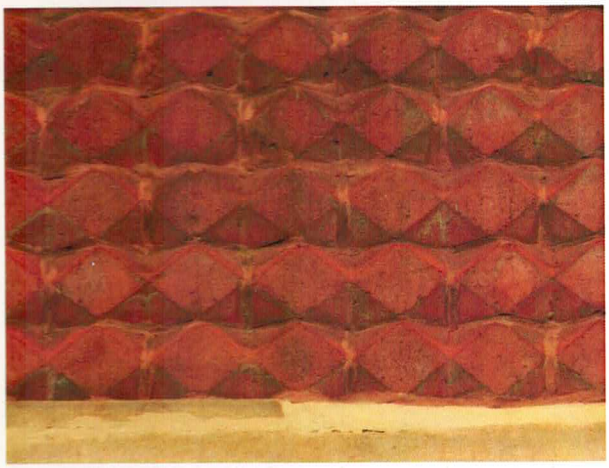
Below right: The triumphal arched entrance of Louis Sullivan's 1894 Chicago Stock Exchange building, which was under construction around the same time as the Peabody School.

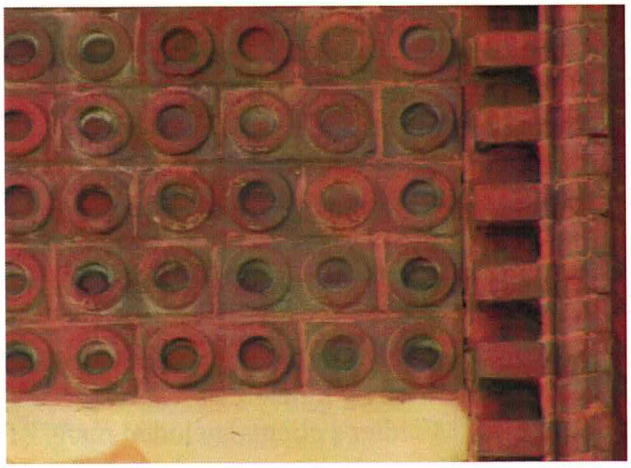
The foliate terra cotta panel exemplifies the building's Queen Anne and Renaissance Revival influences, which were popular in school design during the 1880s and 1890s.

that spells out "ELIZABETH PEABODY" and is embellished with Victorian-style foliate vines. In addition, much molded brick, some with circle patterns and others with raised diamond patterns, is used to edge structural piers and ornament spandrels between windows. Brick is also used for roof parapet paneling and blind arches.

The influence of modern American design aesthetics in the Peabody School, especially the Arts and Crafts, can be seen in the overall clean lines of the building, which emphasize sharp geometry. The building's limestone base is devoid of applied ornament, emphasizing the inherent visual qualities of smooth and rusticated stone. Upper floors utilize the deep red hue, tactile smoothness and tight mortar joints of pressed brick to accentuate the overall sense of mass and volume of the building. Structure is clearly expressed through window groupings, separated by piers outlined in dentil brick moldings and spandrels covered in circle-embellished bricks. Limestone lintels and sills provide visual contrast to the red of the bricks.

The round-arched main entrance, set within a simple squared-off surround and devoid of applied ornament, resembles the Romanesque-influenced entrances to several of Louis Sullivan's buildings, including the Schiller Building of 1891 and especially the Chicago Stock Exchange Building of 1894, under construction at the same time as the Peabody School. Fiedler's architectural office for the Board of Education was located in the Garrick Theater building, and Fiedler would have been well aware of Sullivan's work.

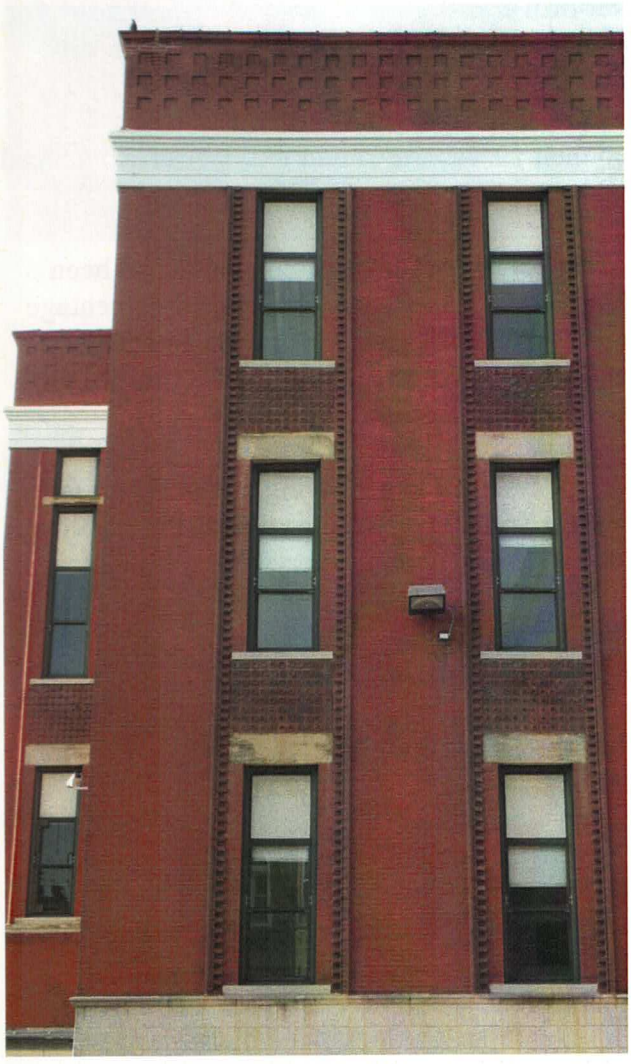




Above right and left: types of pressed pattern brick that can be found between windows.

Left: Smooth brickwork, contrasting deep red brick and ivory-colored stone, and strong vertical lines with sharp geometry point to modern American design aesthetics.

Below: Louis Sullivan's Schiller Building of 1891 where Fiedler had his offices.



Architect W. August Fiedler

Born in Elbing, Germany, **William August Fiedler (1842-1903)** was educated in architecture before emigrating to the United States in 1871. He worked as an architect in New York City for several years, and then moved to Chicago in 1874 as part of a large influx of architects that saw professional opportunity in the rapidly-growing city. Fiedler was also one of a number of German-born architects who were drawn to Chicago with its large German-American population.

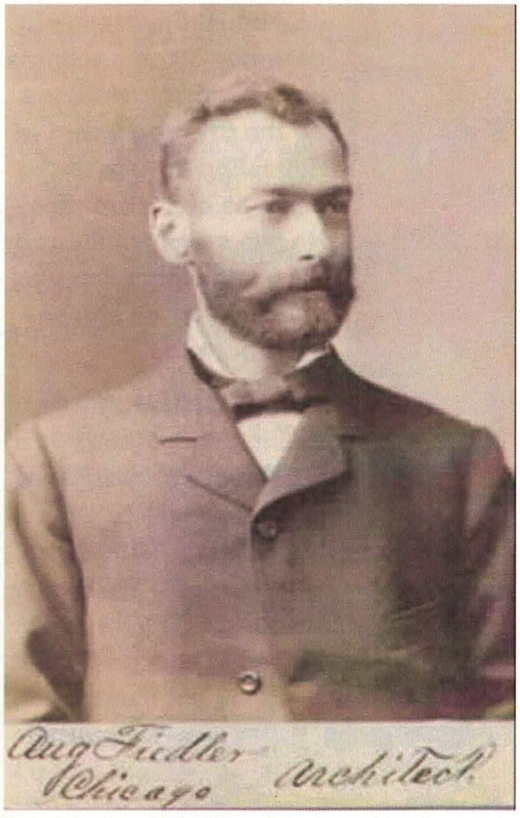
Once in Chicago, Fiedler (generally known by his middle name August) entered the field of interior design and high-quality furniture and furnishings, first in partnership with John W. Roberts and then by himself as A. Fiedler & Co., "Designer and Manufacturer of Artistic Furniture." Fiedler's clients included many of the city's social elite, with one of his most elaborate interior designs created in 1879 for Samuel M. Nickerson's sumptuous residence at 40 East Erie Street (1883, a designated Chicago Landmark).

During the 1880s, Fiedler formed an architectural firm with John Addison, who was known for his "Modern Gothic" designs. The firm designed grand homes and commercial buildings in Chicago and across the Midwest. One of their best Chicago works was the Germania Club Building of 1889 at west Germania Place and north Clark Street (a designated Chicago Landmark). In 1890, Fiedler and Addison ended their partnership, and Fiedler briefly practiced independently until he was appointed Board of Education Architect in 1893.

Prior to Fiedler's appointment, the position of Architect to the Board of Education had been held by architects who worked on commission rather than salary; they were paid a percentage of the cost of each school in compensation for their work. As a result, architects had tended to produce standard designs that were not site-specific and could easily be copied across the city, guaranteeing a stream of income without the need for great customization.

However, Fiedler was faced with a new employment system and a growing public desire for unique and site-specific architecture. He was hired at $6,000 per year as an architect employed within the Board of Education. As a result, he took over design and supervisory roles that previously had been performed by the school board and its staff. When he started early in 1893, Fiedler employed two superintendents and two draftsmen. However, by 1896 the amount of work required of him necessitated the employment of six draftsmen and thirteen superintendents. The resulting professionalism and the ability for closer cooperation between the Board of Education and the Architect's office was a specific expression of the larger professionalism that was spreading through the architectural profession at the turn of the last century.

During his three years as Architect to the Board of Education, Fiedler designed 58 new school buildings and dozens of additions. It was the greatest period of construction in the school board's history until that time. Among the many school buildings that he designed were the Augustus Burley Public School at 1630 West Barry Avenue, the Richard Yates Public School at 1839 North Richmond Street, and the Goethe Public School at 2236 North Rockwell Street.



Above left: W. August Fiedler around 1880.

Below right: Ad for Fiedler's first Chicago design firm the A. Fiedler & Co., which produced exceptional interior furnishings for some of Chicago's finest homes.

Office
and Manufactory,
24 & 26
Van Buren Street,
between
Michigan and
Wabash Avenues.

A. FIEDLER & CO.

DESIGNERS AND MANUFACTURERS OF

ARTISTIC FURNITURE

—AND—

INTERIOR DECORATIONS,

CHICAGO, ILLINOIS.

AUG. FIEDLER.

L. W. MURRAY.

This cut represents the treatment of a Library wall, where Book Cases, Mantel and Mirror Frame are connected as one piece, in lieu of single and separate pieces.

High Book Cases being necessary to contain all the books, we choose this design to show how all the space can be utilized, keeping good proportions; thus making a piece which gives a favorable impression, by its conception as a complete thing, without regard to the question of cost.

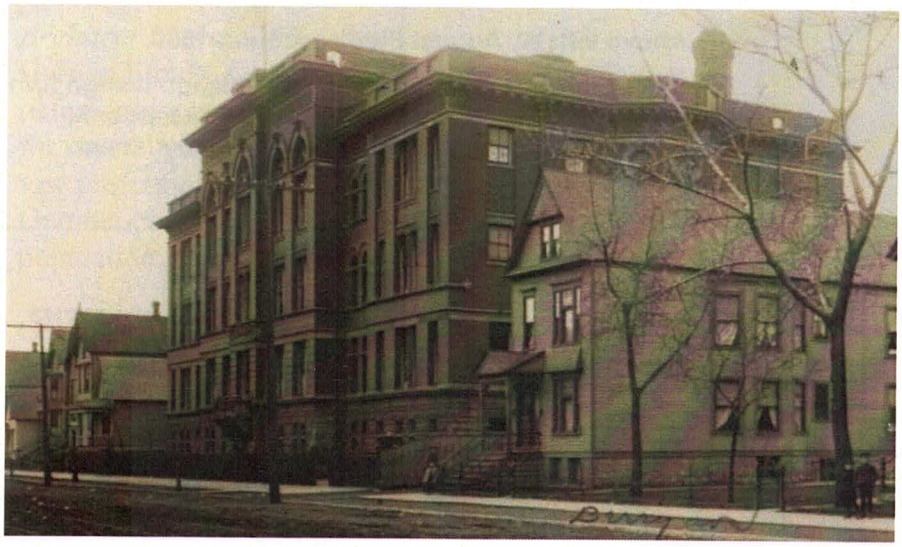
VIEW OF LIBRARY INTERIOR.

In the interest of those who contemplate building, we beg leave to suggest that they confer with us (in case they incline to honor us with a commission for work) in regard to the treatment of the interior, before committing themselves to the old-fashioned ideas of some unstudied architect or mechanic.

Where furniture is bought simply to fill a space, without regard to utility or comfort, ready-made furniture will answer, and we are out of the question. But where the furniture is required as an expression of the individuality of a person, and of an advanced taste, where it is indispensable to a refined home, where it is considered the key to harmonious surroundings, then *ready-made furniture* is out of the question, and it requires knowledge and experience in household art to design it.

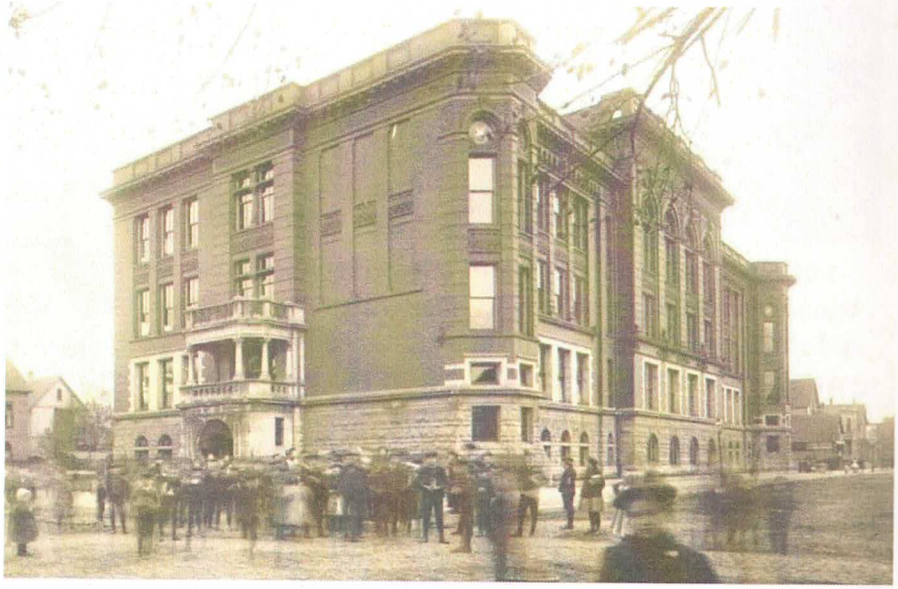
The furniture in certain rooms in a house is inseparable from the doors, trims, wainscoting, etc., and requires careful study. The execution of the same will depend upon the means of the patron. If limited, it can be made good, but economical; if unlimited, can be made elegant, and at large cost.

Left: Fiedler's Germania Club Building of 1889. The building is a designated Chicago

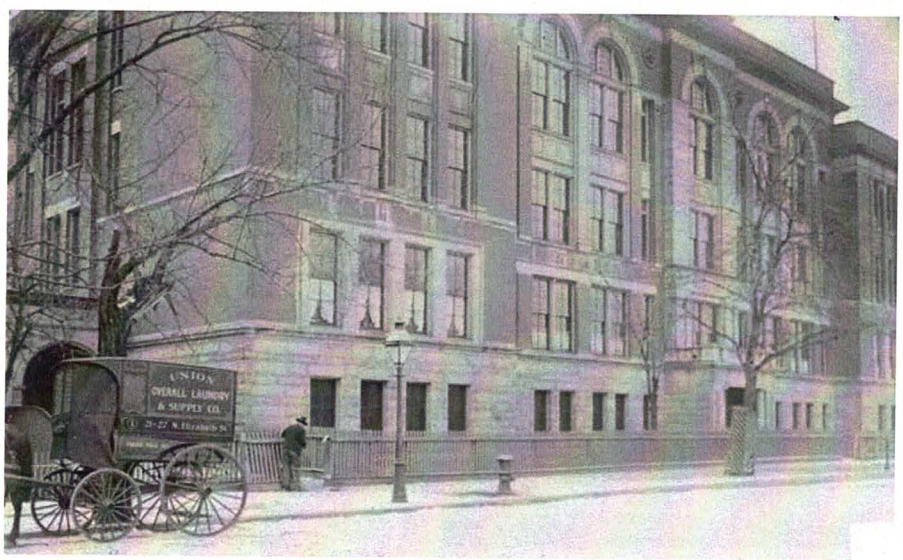


W. August Fiedler designed 58 new schools and dozens of additions for the Chicago Board of Education during his 3 years as board architect. No two schools followed the same plan. Each was designed for its site and neighborhood.

The Augustus H. Burley Public School (left), located at 1630 W. Barry



The Richard Yates Public School (right) at 1839 N. Richmond St. was built in 1896.



Goethe Public School (left) at 2236 N. Rockwell St. was built in 1895.

In 1896, the Board of Education audited Fiedler's department and discovered that the cost of designing new buildings and superintending construction had climbed by 61% during his tenure. This was due to the many new employees required to complete each project, and the Board was unhappy and intended to fire Fiedler. A subsequent investigation exonerated Fiedler, who then chose to resign his position and return to private practice.

Among his later private commissions, one of his more notable was the expansion of the West Side Grounds (Taylor and Wolcott streets), which was at the home of the Chicago Cubs until the team moved to Weeghman Park (now Wrigley Field) in 1916.

Educator Elizabeth Peabody

The Peabody School is named for educator **Elizabeth Palmer Peabody (1804–1894)**. Born in Billerica, Massachusetts, in 1804, Peabody was an abolitionist, an advocate for women's suffrage, and a member of the "Transcendental Club" with close acquaintances Ralph Waldo Emerson, William Channing, and Henry Thoreau. A natural linguist, she learned ten languages, including Polish, which she studied later in life to better understand the United States as it changed thanks to immigration.

Educator Elizabeth P. Peabody

Peabody is best remembered today for her pioneering advocacy of kindergartens and early-childhood education. In 1867, she traveled to Germany to study the teaching methods of educator Friedrich Froebel, who had established the first "kindergarten" in 1837 to offer enriching play and recreation to children between the ages of 4 and 6. Peabody returned to Boston where she established a course to train kindergarten teachers, introducing the kindergarten concept to the United States at a time when early childhood was becoming more recognized as an important stage of childhood. As an author, she completed many works on education and the methods of teaching kindergarten.

Progressive school advocates in the late nineteenth century viewed kindergarten as one of several components that were important in the healthy development of young children. Peabody's advocacy of early childhood learning led to the adoption of kindergarten classes across the country. The Elizabeth Peabody Public School, named for her in honor of her work, was one of ten Chicago public schools to pioneer kindergarten classes in the Chicago Public School system. All subsequent school buildings and school additions in Chicago were built with dedicated kindergarten classrooms.

West Town and the Development of Chicago's Polish Downtown

The Elizabeth Peabody Public School Building is located in the West Town community area on the Near Northwest Side of Chicago. This area grew quickly in the last decades of the nineteenth century as countless European immigrants to the United States fled to the United States seeking a better life by escape Old-World poverty, political upheaval, and religious or ethnic oppression. New schools such as Peabody were built to accommodate the new families that were quickly entering the area. Polish immigration to West Town was especially strong, and quickly surpassed the area's existing German and Scandinavian populations. West Town soon emerged as the largest Polish community outside of Warsaw centered on Milwaukee Avenue near Division Street.

A history of political repression accompanied by much economic deprivation, encouraged millions of Poles to seek their fortunes in the New World. Between 1850 and 1914, an estimated three million Poles fled their homeland. A majority became Americans, entering the United States by way of New York's emigration processing center at Ellis Island, and then settling in predominantly Polish communities in growing American industrial cities such as New York, Pittsburgh, Detroit, Milwaukee, and Chicago.

West Town was first settled by Germans before the 1850s as a farmland. The land was on the northwest fringe of Chicago; a growing metropolis whose boundaries ended at Wood Street on the west and North Avenue on the north. Immediately northwest of the city lay the vast and largely rural Jefferson Township, which was dotted by clusters of frame houses and farming communities. The fire of 1871 prompted an exodus of city residents to surrounding townships, which were lightly developed, relatively inexpensive, and free of mounting building restrictions. Scores of new frame houses quickly filled areas both areas beyond the city and within the West Town area before post-fire building laws were passed in 1874. An even greater development boom transformed West Town following Chicago's 1889 annexation of surrounding townships including Jefferson. New utility connections, city services, and transportation connections raised land values and led to the construction of thousands of new brick cottages and two or more unit flats.

By the end of the nineteenth century, the West Town area was largely built up. It became the primary home of Chicago's Polish community, which was centered on Milwaukee Avenue near Division Street, and known to local residents as "Stanislowowo-Trojcowo" (after the area's two earliest Polish Catholic parishes St Stanislaus and Holy Trinity) and to the rest of Chicago as "Polish Downtown." It was home to tens of thousands of Chicago Poles who lived, worked, worshipped, and learned within a one-square-mile area of the intersection of Division Street, Ashland Avenue, and Milwaukee Avenue, a busy traffic crossing commonly known as the "Polish Triangle," less than a third of a mile to the northwest of the Peabody Public School Building.

Between 1890 and 1937, the city's Polish population grew more than ten-fold to over 500,000, making the Polish Downtown the economic and cultural heart of Chicago Polish life. Polish

Downtown's main commercial streets—Noble Street, Division Street, Ashland Avenue and Milwaukee Avenue—were lined with Polish-owned businesses serving both Polish-speaking neighborhood residents and far-flung Polish Chicagoans visiting from other parts of the metropolitan area.

The area's initial growth during the 1890s was met with the same challenges of overcrowding and limited resources found in other immigrant neighborhoods across the city. At the same time, industry and other uses had begun to fill the community, entering at its borders along Grand Avenue and the river. Like Jane Addams's Hull House and the greater Settlement Movement in the United States, settlement organizations aimed at helping newly arrived citizens become familiar with and settled in their new home appeared across the city. Several such organizations were founded by local universities including Northwestern University, which started the financially-independent Northwestern Settlement in West Town in 1892. In 1901, the settlement moved to their current location at the corner of Augusta and Noble, just east of the Peabody School, in a building designed for them by the architectural firm of Pond and Pond. (The Northwestern University Settlement House is a designated Chicago Landmark.) The proximity of the settlement house to the Peabody School made it possible for the two to share resources. Peabody students frequently participated in activities at Northwestern Settlement, and were in later years allowed to use its large Allison Gymnasium.

After a development peak in the 1940s and 1950s, post-World War II changes to the community, including the 1960 completion of the Northwest Expressway (renamed the Kennedy Expressway) and the arrival of new ethnic groups in the area, caused many of Polish Downtown's older residents to relocate out of the community into other Chicago neighborhoods and suburbs. As the area's population shifted and declined, the Peabody School was quickly identified as being inefficient. During the 1940s, school officials proposed razing Peabody and four other schools, including the nearby Motley School, without replacing them, citing them as obsolete. In the late 1960s, urban renewal advocates proposed an expansive redevelopment project for the triangular area between Augusta Boulevard and Milwaukee Avenue, and the

The "Polish Downtown" was centered around the intersection of Milwaukee Avenue, Division Street, and Ashland Avenue.

This view is facing east along Division towards Milwaukee in 1941.

demolition of Peabody was again proposed. This neighborhood revitalization plan was sold to the public as a requirement for replacing the aging Peabody School, which residents wanted. However, residents successfully fought the plan, leaving Peabody in place. A single-story, freestanding school building was instead built to the east of the existing school building.

Peabody continued to serve the West Town area through 2013. In the decade before its closure, the Board of Education made several repairs including the replacement of windows and the rebuilding of stonework and the parapet in 1998 and 2005, and the rebuilding of the large rear chimney in 2012.

CRITERIA FOR DESIGNATION

According to the Municipal Code of Chicago (Sections 2-120-690), the Commission on Chicago Landmarks has the authority to make a final recommendation of landmark designation for an area, district, place, building, structure, work of art or other object with the City of Chicago if the Commission determines it meets two or more of the stated "criteria for designation," as well as possesses a significant degree of historic integrity to convey its significance.

The following should be considered by the Commission on Chicago Landmarks in determining whether to recommend that the Elizabeth Peabody Public School Building be designated as a Chicago Landmark.

Criterion 1: Example of City, State, or National Heritage

Its value as an example of the architectural, cultural, economic, historic, social, or other aspect of the heritage of the City of Chicago, the State of Illinois, or the United States.

- The Elizabeth Peabody Public School Building exemplifies the importance of Chicago's public schools to the City's social and cultural history.

- Public education has historically been one of the most important responsibilities of Chicago government, and public school buildings often are visual and social anchors in the City's neighborhoods. Opened in 1895, the Elizabeth Peabody Public School was one such institution in the West Town community area for almost 120 years, serving initially German and Polish immigrants and their children.

Criterion 4: Exemplary Architecture

Its exemplification of an architectural type or style distinguished by innovation, rarity, uniqueness, or overall quality of design, detail, materials, or craftsmanship.

- The Elizabeth Peabody Public School Building is a handsome example of a public school building, a building type of significance to the history of Chicago and its neighborhoods.

- The building is finely designed, combining both historic architectural styles, including the

Richardson Romanesque and Queen Anne, with progressive visual elements influenced from the Arts and Crafts and the contemporary work of Louis H. Sullivan.

- The building's exterior, with its finely-detailed red brick and stone walls embellished with decoration in stone, molded brick, terra cotta and decorative metal, exemplifies the fine craftsmanship that defines historic architecture.

- In its emphasis on large windows and high ceilings which provided large, airy, well-lighted classrooms, the building reflects late-nineteenth century school ideals.

Integrity Criterion

The integrity of the proposed landmark must be preserved in light of its location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, and ability to express its historic community, architectural, or aesthetic value.

The Elizabeth Peabody Public School Building retains its historic integrity in location, site, setting, form and details. Overall, the building maintains a very high degree of architectural integrity on its exterior. The building retains historic red-brick upper walls and exterior ornamental detailing, including red molded brick, red terra cotta and light-painted decorative metal.

Changes to the building's exterior are relatively minor and do not detract from its ability to convey its architectural and historical significance. Damaged first-floor stone cladding was replaced with a similar, but more durable stone and carved to match the original design and profiles. Ground-floor doors have been replaced, a common change found in school buildings from the nineteenth century. Windows have also been replaced.

Despite these changes, the Elizabeth Peabody Public School Building retains its ability to express its architectural and historical values as a finely-designed and -crafted public school building. The building exemplifies the significance of public school buildings to the history of Chicago and its neighborhoods. The building's historic integrity is preserved in light of its location, design, setting, materials, workmanship and ability to express such values.

SIGNIFICANT HISTORICAL AND ARCHITECTURAL FEATURES

Whenever an area, district, place, building, structure, work of art or other object is under consideration for landmark designation, the Commission on Chicago Landmarks is required to identify the "significant historical and architectural features" of the property. This is done to enable the owners and the public to understand which elements are considered most important to preserve the historical and architectural character of the proposed landmark.

Based upon its preliminary evaluation of the Elizabeth Peabody Public School Building, the Commission staff recommends that the significant features be identified as:

- All exterior elevations, including rooflines, of the building.

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Children exit the Peabody School down the west stairwell during a fire drill, 1953.

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